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**From:** U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration <dea@govdelivery.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, February 10, 2012 12:03 PM  
**To:** Khan, Annie (DPH)  
**Subject:** U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration Dateline DEA Update

## **Dateline DEA**

Drug Enforcement Administration's Biweekly E-mail Informant

February 10, 2012

### **Top Stories from the DEA, January 28 to February 10, 2012**

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#### **DEA Afghan Threat Finance Cell Unit Receives Joint Chiefs of Staff Award**

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff awarded the Joint Meritorious Unit Award for exceptionally meritorious service to the Afghan Threat Finance Cell (ATFC), a DEA-led unit that investigates and disrupts financial networks that finance the insurgency. The Joint Meritorious Unit Award, established in 1981, is deemed equivalent to the Defense Superior Service Medal that is awarded to an individual.

The ATFC began operations in mid-2009 and it seeks to identify and disrupt financial networks utilized to fund the insurgency. The ATFC does this by attacking insurgent funding and financing networks by providing threat finance expertise and actionable intelligence to U.S. civilian and military leaders. Personnel are embedded with military commands across Afghanistan to improve the targeting of the insurgents' financial structure. In partnership with specially-vetted Afghan police units and the Afghan military, the ATFC has collected tens of thousands of financial documents from financial institutions including hawalas—the informal banking system prevalent throughout the Islamic world. Many of these are utilized to conduct illicit financial activities, to include financing insurgents, transferring drug money, and funding corruption.

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#### **Operator of Large Scale California Ecstasy Trafficking Ring Sentenced**

On February 7 a Monterey Park, California man who pled guilty to federal drug trafficking charges and admitted he was responsible for the distribution of hundreds of thousands of Ecstasy pills in the course of only a few months was sentenced to 22 years in federal prison. The judge, when sentencing Jimmy Luong to 22 years in federal prison, noted that the scope of Luong's Ecstasy distribution operation was "extraordinary" and one of the largest he had ever seen.

Luong, 30, who was the leader of a drug trafficking organization that in only a few months – March 2010 through July 2010 – distributed more than one million Ecstasy pills in Southern California. Ecstasy is a common street name for a club drug that contains the chemical 3,4-Methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA).

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#### **Charges in Large Detroit Heroin, Cocaine, Marijuana Conspiracy**

On February 1 an indictment was unsealed in Detroit against 12 individuals who were charged with conspiracy to distribute in excess of 30 kilograms of heroin, 12 kilograms of cocaine, 1,000 pounds of marijuana, and laundering more than \$21 million.

Beginning in 2006 and ending earlier this year these 12 individuals operated a drug organization that sold drugs to be transported to Phoenix, Arizona, Mexico and elsewhere. As part of the conspiracy, the members of the organization would use semi-trucks and vehicles equipped with traps and hidden compartments to transport drugs as well as the cash generated from their sale. They used these illegal proceeds to purchase more drugs; luxury vehicles, including a Rolls Royce, Bentleys, and a Ferrari; at least eight pieces of real property; and hundreds of thousands of dollars of jewelry while concealing the true source and nature of the funds through false names and nominee purchasers.

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#### **DEA Suspends Major Distributor, Retailer of Controlled Substances in Florida**

On February 5 Immediate Suspension Orders (ISO) were issued for Cardinal Health's wholesale distribution center in Lakeland, Florida, and on February 6 for two of its customers in Sanford, Florida: CVS/Pharmacy #219 and CVS/Pharmacy #5195. An ISO is served when a DEA-registered business or individual constitutes an imminent danger to the public safety and suspends a registrant's ability to handle or distribute a controlled substance such as oxycodone, hydrocodone, and others pending a judicial proceeding.

The ISO against Cardinal Health alleges that the distribution center failed to maintain effective controls against the diversion of controlled substances and failed to conduct due diligence to ensure that the controlled substances were not diverted. This is not the first time DEA has issued an ISO against Cardinal Health's Lakeland facility. In December 2007 DEA issued an ISO due to its distribution of hydrocodone to 'rogue' internet pharmacies. That action, and similar actions at other Cardinal Health facilities, resulted in a \$34 million fine.

The ISOs served at the two CVS/Pharmacies allege, among other things, that each failed to exercise its duty regarding the proper prescribing and dispensing of controlled substances. According to the ISO, each registrant was filling prescriptions far in excess of the legitimate needs of its customers. The average pharmacy in the U.S. in 2011 ordered approximately 69,000 oxycodone dosage units. Collectively, these two pharmacies ordered more than three million dosage units during the same year.

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#### **DID YOU KNOW?**

If you want to find hyperlinks to some of the most important current research and studies done by U.S. government agencies on drug abuse and drug trends, DEA's website, *Get Smart About Drugs*, is one good place to look. On this regularly updated website, which is designed for parents, you'll find up to date information that will help you keep your household drug free. To view recent research and studies, click [here](#). To view DEA publications, click [here](#) and [here](#).

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